



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P.O. BOX 8952 • MADISON, WI 53708

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 29, 2016

Contact: Rep. Spreitzer (608) 266-1192, Rep. Considine (608) 266-7746

Redistricting reform to get real hearing: APRIL FOOL'S!

MADISON- Yesterday, Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections Chairwoman Kathy Bernier (R-Chippewa Falls) attempted to play a trick on Wisconsinites by scheduling an informational hearing on legislative redistricting this coming Friday, April 1. The committee will allow only invited guests to speak, and the hearing is conveniently scheduled to coincide with April Fool's Day, the weekend, and just before the hotly contested Republican and Democratic Presidential Primaries and Wisconsin Supreme Court election that will dominate the next week's news. Given the scheduling and lack of opportunity for public input, Rep. Mark Spreitzer (D-Beloit) and Rep. Dave Considine (D-Baraboo) found little about this event to laugh at.

"What a cruel April Fool's joke to play on the people of Wisconsin: holding this charade of a hearing designed to give Wisconsinites hope for real reform on an extremely popular idea at a time when Chairwoman Bernier knows that legislative redistricting has zero chance of becoming law this session," said Rep. Spreitzer. "The invited experts will tell the committee what we already know: a model for effective non-partisan redistricting reform exists, is being used successfully in Iowa, and has already been introduced this session as AB 328. The people of Wisconsin won't fall for this prank."

AB 328, introduced by the Assembly Democratic Freshman Caucus co-chaired by Reps. Spreitzer and Considine, would take the responsibility for redistricting out of the hands of partisan politicians and assign the task of drawing new maps to the non-partisan Legislative Reference Bureau. Chairwoman Bernier's April Fool's committee has chosen to outright ignore AB 328, which has sat in her committee for six months, and instead give the appearance of fulfilling a promise to consider redistricting she has sidestepped for years.

"Both houses of the legislature have made clear that this session is over, making it impossible for any bills on redistricting reform to pass," said Rep. Considine. "Either Speaker Vos, who has consistently dismissed non-partisan redistricting as a 'nonstarter,' has had a sudden change of heart on the matter, or more likely, he is pushing one of his most vulnerable Republican members to masquerade as a redistricting reform champion in order to increase her chances of reelection."

Wisconsin is among the most gerrymandered states in the nation, leaving voters with few choices for who represents them. In the 2014 election, 90 percent of all legislative candidates in Wisconsin won by margins greater than 10%. This is in contrast to 2010, the last election before maps were redrawn, when more than twice as many races were decided within a 10 point margin.

"We need action, not more talk, on redistricting reform," Spreitzer added. "While we appreciate an opportunity for experts to further highlight this need, Chairwoman Bernier and Speaker Vos must take real action if they want anyone to think they are serious. Unfortunately for this session, it is already too little, too late."

###